

The Second Bi-annual newsletter

(freedom of the Press July-December 2015)

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Research By
Wesam Atta

Translated to English By
Aida Saif ElDawla



Publisher
Association for freedom of thought and expression

5 Ibrahim Naguib St, 3rd Floor,
Garden City, Cairo, Egypt
info@afteegypt.org
www.afteegypt.org
+201275206325

Cover &
pages by:

Introduction

Violations against the press and media community in Egypt has doubled in the second half of 2015 compared to the first half, when the media freedom program at AFTE recorded 366 violation against journalists and media personnel, with an increase of approximately 112% compared to the first half where we recorded only 172 cases!

The doubling of violations during the second half of the year does not necessarily indicate a drastic change in the environment surrounding the work of journalists, considering the density of events during the second half, foremost parliamentary elections, which extended over two phases in October, November and December had alone 126 violations against the press and the media compared to the first 6 months.

Violations recorded by the program (which do not necessarily reflect all that happened throughout the year, but only what our researchers managed to document) included preventing coverage, illegal detention, obstruction and arbitrariness, confiscation or breaking of equipment or deleting material from equipment, beatings or causing injury, deductions from salaries, arbitrary dismissal, arrest, confiscation and shredding of issues, banning articles, banning from writing, blocking printing of an issue, suspension from work, raiding a press institution, preventing release, raiding homes or altering an article without consent of its author.

This newsletter reviews in detail the violations to which the press and media community have been subjected to and which affected its performance which was protected and guaranteed by the constitution and international conventions, highlighting violations and the parties most affected as well as bodies most encroaching on freedom of the press and the media.

In its second section the newsletter includes a documentation of violations against journalists during coverage of the different stages of parliamentary elections.

Finally, in its third section the newsletter includes a list of journalists in prison as a result of their journalistic work, whether sentenced or in pretrial detention, while clarifying the criteria adopted by the program for inclusion in the list.

Methodology of Monitoring and Documentation

The monitoring activity of the association is carried out by the researchers of the media freedom program as well as the lawyers of the association in addition as what is published on news networks and websites, foremost the group "journalists against torture". The association then confirms the accuracy of the reports through direct contact with the victims their families or eyewitnesses or through posts by the victims themselves on their personal pages, in the media or through statements released by the press and media bodies to which the person concerned is affiliated.

Timeframe:

Violations against journalists between the 26th of June 2015 to the 31st of December 2015.

Geographical frame

National – Egypt

Criteria for inclusion in the report

1. Confirmation of identity through one of the following: Press ID, work permit, mission authorization from a newspaper or media outlet, media archive in a press institution, certification by press institution or its officials.
2. Confirmation of institutional identity: Any of the following: a page or website or publication in addition to a public means of communication.
3. Evidence that journalist was on the job when subject to violation: Any of the following: work permit, authorization for that particular job, victim testimony, eyewitness testimony, public testimony by press institution.

Classification of perpetrator

1- Government officials

2- Security bodies: including ministry of interior, ministry of defense, law and order groups, also civilians in the presence of formal security forces.

3- Private security, includes any private guards, whether independent or affiliated to a company. In case appointed by a governmental body, included within the first category.

4- Judicial bodies

5- Demonstrators

6- Supporters or representatives of a candidate.

7- Other civilian groups.

Institutions related to the victim

1- TV and Radio Union, includes all state owned channels

2- Privately owned Egyptian channels: including all private channels whose headquarter is in Egypt

3- Private Egyptian publications: Magazines or newspapers

4- State-owned Egyptian publications: Magazines or newspapers

5- Egyptian partisan publications

6- News websites or networks: includes all websites and networks on the internet publishing news or press material not related to personal events.

7- Multiple: including several of the above

8- Unknown: Institution of the victim could not be identified.

Note: In case of multiple journalistic activities of the same institution we included the most organized and structured body. E.g. in case of an institution producing a printed newspaper and a website, we considered the journalist to be working in its publication.

Arrest: Restraining the freedom of a journalist, escorting him to a police station and writing a police record.

Illegal detention: Restraining the freedom of a journalist, escorting him to a place of detention and releasing him without a police report.

Arrest and arbitrariness: Blocking the freedom of a journalist while doing his work for some time without taking him into detention.

Defining a violation:

Any violation that occurs to a single journalist in a particular time and place. The violation is defined by four criteria: time of violation, place of violation, type of violation and the persona of the victim. For example if three journalists are arrested on a certain occasion, where one was beaten, the equipment of the other confiscated it would count as five violations: three for the arrests of the three journalists, a violation of beating a journalist and a violation of confiscation of equipment.

Note: In case of collective violation such as preventing from coverage it was counted as one violation since it targeted the ban of coverage by the profession and not a particular journalist, also to avoid statistical inaccuracy regarding inability to identify the exact number and IDs of journalists involved, especially that such violations almost constitute a daily occurrence.

The violation: is all violations that happened to a journalist or more in a particular place at a particular time to be identified by two main variables: the place of violation, the time of violation.

Note: the numbers mentioned in the report are not necessarily the actual numbers but only those for which the association had access.

I. Second half of 2015: Unsafe environment for journalistic work

Contrary to statements by Egyptian President Abdelfattah El Sisi in an interview with CNN, when he said that Egypt is witnessing an unprecedented media freedom, the unsafe environment for journalists and media personnel continues. The mere carrying of a camera on the street raises suspicions regarding the person, his intentions and the institution he is working for and makes that person susceptible to violations, that are not controllable and whose perpetrators enjoy impunity, not only among executive bodies but also by those who have been influenced by the atmosphere of political polarization, from which Egypt has been suffering for years and which escalated greatly after the 3rd of July 2013 decisions. that frenzy is constantly nourished and fed by the authorities.

The press and media community is subjected to major violations that obstruct its performance. The media freedom program documented during the past 6 months 366 violation against journalists and the media, most notably prevention of media coverage which amounted to 169 cases, followed by suspension from work (68 cases), beatings and causing injury (31 cases), confiscation, breaking equipment or deleting material from equipment (28 cases), obstruction and arbitrariness, illegal detention, and arrest (28, 11 and 15 cases respectively). .

Number of violations by type	
Illegal detention	11
Stopping and arbitrariness	27
Raiding a home	1
Confiscating equipment, breaking it or deleting its content	28
Amending article without informing author	1
Beating or causing injury	31
Deduction from salary	2
Arbitrary dismissal from work	1
Arrest	15
Confiscation or shredding	1
Ban of an article	4
Ban from writing	2
Ban of coverage	169
Stop of printing of an issue	3
Suspension from work	68
Raid of a press institution	1
Prevention of release	1
Total	**366**

Official bodies, whether executive or judicial, were not the only bodies to violate the right of journalists and media personnel in carrying their work. In addition to security bodies, which came on top of the list of perpetrators (152 violation) and judicial authorities which came next (56 cases) and government officials (14 cases), press and media bodies themselves violated rights of is journalists and media personnel and writers in performing their profession, reaching 50 cases of violation. The list of perpetrators also included different civilian groups (43 cases).

No of violations according to perpetrator	
Security bodies	152
Judicial bodies	56
Government officials	14
Press or media bodies	50
Private guard or security	21
Demonstrators	3
Other civilian groups	40
Unknown	1
Radio and TV union	29

Private Egyptian publications came top of the list regarding violations during the past 6 months (130 cases) second only to the collective ban on publication for all journalists (135 cases). Journalists working in state owned publications suffered 7 violations and employees at the Radio and TV union 30 violations)

Violations according to victim's institution	
Private Egyptian publications	130
Partisan Egyptian publications	4
State owned Egyptian publication	7
News networks and websites	36
Radio and TV union	31
Egyptian private channels	9
Multiple	135
Not identified	14
Total	**366**

Geographically the violations were distributed over 19 governorates, where Cairo and Giza had the highest share (233 and 64 respectively) followed by North Sinai (10 violations), and Alexandria (8 cases).

Violations according to governorate	
Cairo	233
Giza	64
Qalubeya	3
Alexandria	8
Beheira	5
KafrElsheikh	4
Gharbeya	4
Menufeya	6
Dakahleya	5
Sharkeya	2
Ismailia	2
Suez	3
North Sinai	10
Fayoum	1
Assiut	6
Sohag	3
Luxor	2
Aswan	2
Port Said	1
Qena	2

As mentioned in the introduction the density of events, especially parliamentary elections, was the reason in the doubling of number of violations in the second half compared to the first half, which did not include many events worth covering. The number of violations reached 105 by the end of October, 90 in November and 64 in December.

Violations according to month of occurrence	
Last week of June	4
July	37
August	26
September	38
October	105
November	92
December	64

Preventing coverage

Preventing media coverage was the most frequent violation during the previous 6 months. We can say that it was the characteristic feature of journalistic work since the January revolution in 2011, where the press and media are always surrounded with potential suspicion for being the medium to inform people regarding developments in their country. This violation is also key to understand a culture that is unfortunately spreading among state institutions and bodies denying journalists the right o execute their right granted them by the constitution and the law to bring the truth to their audience as part of the public's right to knowledge.

Security and judicial bodies are the authorities most commonly preventing journalists from doing their work (75 cases by security authorities and 53 cases by judicial bodies). Violations ranged between preventing coverage of trials, elections inside poll stations in a number of constituencies.

Number of cases banned from coverage according to banning authority	
Security bodies	75
Judicial bodies	53
Private or guarding authority	12
Other civilian categories	15
Government bodies	13
Demonstrators	1
Total	**169**

In 135 cases the ban on journalists was collective, while journalists in private Egyptian publications were banned in 16 cases and those working in news networks or websites were banned in 12 cases.

No of cases of banned coverage according to press institution	
State owned Egyptian publication	1
Partisan Egyptian publication	2
Private Egyptian publication	16
News networks and websites	12
Private Egyptian channels	3
Multiple	135
Total	**169**

Beating or causing injury

In the absence of accountability and redress, violations against journalists did not stop at preventing them from doing their work but went beyond that to assaulting them physically, without any investigation of perpetrators, sending a clear message that security forces have a free hand in preventing journalists from doing their work.

The program documented 31 cases of physical assault on journalists or causing injury, committed by civilian groups (13 cases), security bodies (8 cases) and private security or guards (6 cases)

Cases subjected to beating or injury according to perpetrator	
Security bodies	12
Private security	6
Civilian groups	13
Total	**31**

Press correspondents were the category most exposed to beatings during the last six months with a rate of 20 cases, followed by photographers (10 cases) and one journalist was subject to beatings.

No of cases subjected to beatings according to profession of victim	
Press correspondents	20
Press Photographers	10
Media Personnel	1
Total	**31**

Cases of arrest, illegal detention, obstruction and arbitrariness

According to Perpetrator	Illegal detention	Arrest	Obstruction and arbitrariness
Security bodies	9	14	26
Judicial bodies	0	0	1
Civilian groups	1	0	0
Demonstrators	1	0	0
Total	**11**	**14**	**27**

According to victim's profession	Illegal detention	Arrest	Obstruction and arbitrariness
Correspondents/ journalists	6	10	17
Press Photographers	4	1	10
Media personnel	1	3	0
Total	**11**	**14**	**27**

Parliamentary elections disclosed the animosity of official bodies towards the camera and its non-changing attitude towards the press

In the first issue of the semi-annual newsletter produced by the media freedom program at the association we mentioned a notable decrease in the number of violations committed against media freedom. However we explained that decrease be a parallel decrease in the rate of events rather than a change in the attitude of official bodies towards journalists and their practice of their profession, a matter which became clearly apparent in the numbers recorded by the association during the second half of the year – the timeframe of this newsletter – where the numbers doubled in view of ongoing events, foremost parliamentary elections.

Parliamentary elections spread over 12 days, 4 days during the month of October which included the elections and their rerun of the first stage, and 4 days in November, including the same for the second stage. Elections were also repeated in some constituencies in Alexandria during 4 days in December. Over 12 days the association recorded 126 violations, equal to 34.4% of those committed during a six months period. Violations recorded during the electoral process ranged between preventing journalists and media personnel from coverage, arrest or illegal detention, arbitrariness in obstructing their work, beatings or causing injury or confiscating, breaking or deleting material from their equipment.

No. of violations against journalists during coverage of elections according to nature of violation	
Prevention of coverage	83
Obstruction and arbitrariness	10
Illegal detention	5
Arrest	2
Confiscating, breaking or deleting material from equipment	15
Beating or causing injury	11

Also police and military forces in charge of securing poll stations committed 65 violations, while judicial bodies supervising the electoral process committed 42 violations while representatives and supporters of candidates committed 19 violations.

No. of violations against journalists during coverage of elections according to nature of perpetrator of violation	
Security forces (police, military)	65
Supervising judicial bodies	42
Representatives or supporters of candidate	19

Geographically Cairo witnessed the highest rate of violations at a rate of 57 in Cairo followed by 33 in Giza, then Alexandria and North Sinai with 5 violations in each.

No of violations against journalists during coverage of elections per governorate	
Cairo	57
Giza	33
Qalubeya	1
Alexandria	5
Beheira	2
KafrElsheikh	1
Gharbeya	2
Menufeya	4
Dakahleya	4
Sharkeya	1
North Sinai	5
Fayoum	1
Assiut	3
Sohag	3
Qena	2
Aswan	2

Detained journalists

No	Name of detained journalist	Known as	Profession and place of work	Date of arrest	Case no.	Legal situation	Judicial authority in charge	Sentence
1	Mahmud Abdelshakour Abu Zeid	Shawkan	Photographer, Demotex press agency	14/08/2013	Madinet Nasr administrative court I no. 15899/2013	Pretrial detention, ongoing trial in criminal court	Cairo criminal court, 28 south	Pending
2	Samhi Mostafa ahmed Abdelalim	Samhi Mostafa	Executive Director. Rassd news network	25/08/2013	Agouza criminal case no. 2210/2014 and state security case no. 317/2014	Pretrial detention, ongoing trial in criminal court	Cairo criminal court, after acceptance of appeal at the court of cassation	Pending
3	Mohamed Mohamed Mostafa Eladly	Mohamed Eladly	Correspondent and anchor, Amgad satellite channel	25/08/2013	Agouza criminal case no. 2210/2014 and state security case no. 317/2014	Pretrial detention, ongoing trial in criminal court	Cairo criminal court, after acceptance of appeal at the court of cassation	Pending
4	Abdallah Ahmed Mohamed Isamil El Fakharani	Abdallah Elfakharani	Founding member, Rassd news network	25/08/2013	Agouza criminal case no. 2210/2014 and state security case no. 317/2014	Pretrial detention, ongoing trial in criminal court	Cairo criminal court, after acceptance of appeal at the court of cassation	Pending
5	Ahmed Fouad Mohamed el Sayed	Ahmed Fuad	Correspondent, Karmooz website	25/01/2014	Montaza I administrative case no. 1416/2014	Pretrial detention, ongoing trial in criminal court	Alexandria criminal court, circuit no. 6	Pending
6	Hassan Mahmud Ragab Elqabbani	Hassan Elqabani	Journalist, Elkarama newspaper	22/01/2015	State security case no. 318/2015	Pretrial detention, hearing sessions pending investigation	State security prosecution	Not referred to trial

7	Abdel-rahman Abdel-salam Arafa Yaqut	Abdel-rahman Yaqut	Photog-rapher, Karmooz news website	21/03/2015	Dekheila criminal case no. 8558/2015 and west Alexandria case no. 1206/2014	Pretrial deten-tion, ongoing trial in criminal court	Alexandria criminal court	Pend-ing
8	Abu Bakr Khallaf		Head of the union of electronic media personnel	21/07/2015	Kasr El Nil misde-meanor case no. 4748/2015	Pretrial deten-tion, hearing sessions pend-ing investiga-tion	Kasr El Nil partial pros-ecution	Not re-ferred to trial
9	Mahmud Mo-hamed Abdelna-bi		Corre-spondent, Rassd network	03/07/2013	Montaza criminal case no. 50666/2014 and East Alexandria case no. 4214/2014	Pretrial deten-tion, ongoing trial in criminal court	Alexandria criminal court, circuit no. 8	Pend-ing
10	Ismail Elsayed Mo-hamed Omar Taufik	Ismail Eleskan-darani	Journalist	29/11/2015	State secu-rity case no. 569/2015	Pretrial deten-tion, hearing sessions pend-ing investiga-tion	State secu-rity prosecu-tion	Not re-ferred to trial
11	Mo-hamed Abdel-moneim Imam Mo-hamed		Journal-ist, Tahya Misr newspa-per	24/04/2015	Dar Elsalam criminal case no. 5197/2015 pending investiga-tion no. 197/2015	Sentenced	Dar Elsalam criminal court	3 years

For more information on detained journalists and criteria adopted by the associa-tion, please visit:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1mEHfq676eWOH7AKla_KQeCf92hjpi-693losVD2moahE/edit#gid=164824476

Footnote 1: El Sisi

http://bit.ly/1njkHqn